

The Big Three Group Meeting Summary
Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)
League of Minnesota Cities (LMC)
Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)

Monday, May 1, 2006 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
AMC Board Room, 125 Charles Avenue, St. Paul, MN

Attendees:

AMC: Nancy Schouweiler, Bob Fenwick, Paul Wilson, Jim Mulder, Mary Kummer, Laurie Klupacs, Scott Simmons

LMC: Marvin Johnson, Ray Melander, Jim Miller, Kevin Frazell, Mary-Margaret Zindren, Sarah Dirksen.

MSBA: Dennis Halverson, Gary Lee, Rolf Parsons, Bob Meeks.

Guests: Gary Fields – Blandin Foundation regarding Broadband Initiative; Patricia Coldwell – AMC regarding Pandemic Flu.

The Association of Minnesota Counties chaired this meeting. Jim Mulder called the meeting to order and welcomed the group.

Key Issues of Joint Concern / Potential Joint Projects Presented and Discussed:

Legislative Report: With three weeks left of this year's session, the group heard reports given by group members and discussed aspects / issues of joint concern including the bonding bill, eminent domain, cap status, joint powers bill, supplementals – many amendments, K-12 bill, health bill, TRA bill, irrevocable trust bill, and finance discussion.

Suggestion: The Big Three should have a good wrap up of the Legislative Session at the next meeting.

Broadband: The group heard from Gary Fields, Project Consultant for Blandin Foundation Initiative on Broadband. The Blandin Broadband Initiative is designed to catalyze broadband investment and use, raise awareness about the value of broadband and encourage public and private investment in rural broadband capacity. Expanding the use of broadband technology increases the potential to retain jobs in rural areas, grows new markets for business, strengthens health care, enhances educational access and improves the quality-of-life. Per Gary, broadband in MN is 2nd class compared to global competitors; some areas of MN think they have the service but actually don't have it, others that have the service don't use it – so incentive for service providers is not there; challenge for us to be global competitors; part of issue is the Digital Divide – not urban vs. rural it's income lines and age lines.

Gary referenced the published Community Guide available for download from website and written for MN citizens: www.blandinfoundation.org

Broadband is seen as a convenience not a necessity; equated it to electricity 100 years ago. Education challenge with the perception; the need is to be more competitive; broadband is becoming less of a convenience and more of a necessity.

Is the driver of this going to be residence or business? Schools, hospitals and clinics and government agencies using it drives residence users and vice versa; tipping point happens when all these sectors work together to get Broadband; they feed into each other and “take rate” increases.

Blandin asks for this group to help provide educational venues to get people to use what we already have. Show folks on-line what they can do that they cannot do currently, demonstrates the wide range of what they could do if this was in place. Blandin volunteers to come into the communities – they ask for champions in communities.

Group asks for examples of global use: hospitals could send/receive specialist data anywhere in the world; education example given; engineers can send very high volume files; large volumes of data and video imagery this way.

Cost of installing fiber optic line is same as copper line. Group heard pros and cons of wireless: wireless is less expensive for the consumer, not that big of an investment, good introduction to technology; however not as reliable, bandwidth is smaller, not a long-term solution.

Gary proposed the Governor’s Broadband Award concept as a joint Counties/Cities/School Boards event; purpose is to recognize innovators and showcase novel broadband applications in MN. Award shares information and examples of innovations. Blandin working on both sides: demand side – use what we have now builds demand for future, and infrastructure side – if demand is there, suppliers and government want to invest.

Suggestion: Governments need to make the commitment to build the infrastructure and not wait for industry to drive it. Similar to roads or electricity.

Suggestion: Use the Governor’s Award as a statewide Big Three Associations joint effort working together.

Pandemic Flu: Based on the suggestion from the March 17 Big Three meeting (have a standing agenda item at this Big Three meeting from the latest Collaboration Working Group meeting to keep the Big Three Group members informed), the group recapped the Pandemic Flu educational discussion that occurred at the Collaboration Working Group meeting on April 27. Observation: Hard to be leaders without an army. One fear = who is in charge? Too many people think they are in charge and making the decisions.

Suggestion: The Big Three should create a common vision or common response; a shared vision that will drive the “who’s in charge”.

Suggestion: Establish talking points identifying Emergency Powers Act, closures, who does what, etc. so local communities start thinking of the concept. Involve community leaders in figuring out their community’s own individual response. The Big Three role = help communities do that planning; be a catalyst.

Many meetings and discussion are occurring already now – at a staff level not at a governance level.

Suggestion: Use other elements / options that are similar to Pandemic Flu that would use these plans i.e. Hoof and Mouth disease, terrorist acts – Emergency Powers Act addresses other scenarios not just Pan Flu, broaden our focus. We need to respond as a unified front, as proven by Hurricane Katrina.

Meth: Jim Mulder updated the group on the Meth issue with IQ magazine and Big Three logo'd CD ordering/distribution information. Group discussed the City Pages "Best of" issue stating meth is the best cheap thrill. Apology and retraction will appear in next City Pages however group questions if it will be noticed.

Suggestion: The Big Three place a full-page ad denouncing this category selection and point out the costs of the drug to user and society. LMC will check into specifics of ad. Big Three Group agreed unanimously to place some kind of ad in the next issue of City Pages publication.

Members talked about the approach the treatment centers are taking regarding meth and how it differs from the Big Three view – treatment centers are putting meth in the category of alcohol and the Big Three perspective is that meth is not the same as any other drug. The public is hearing two different messages. Group analyzed why it's different – more violent, correctional angle, more women, the new drug of choice in the military.

Joint Legislative Conference Potential: Staff from the three groups will explore this concept in depth after the Legislative Session winds down. Details to be announced.

Other Issues:

Contract ended yesterday with Christine Alameda, special lobbyist on the tort stacking issue; Cities, Counties, School Boards, Townships teamed up with co-op money to fund her efforts each month.

Suggestion: Each of the associations in the Big Three will fund Alameda's effort for one more month. Group wishes for an itemized account of efforts to share with their own Boards as needed.

Suggestion: Collaboration Working Group meet quarterly. Big Three Group meet more frequently than quarterly. One hope is for the Big Three to work together on Legislative issues this fall; look for opportunities to work together.

Suggestion: Create agendas to further the process for each group = the Collaboration Working Group and the Big Three Group. Keep in mind the outcome and what each group wants to accomplish. Discussion on Collaboration Working Group and this group and how each group differs.

Suggestion: Identify other issues are communities facing that this group could help with.

1. Succession Planning – how to develop model to deal with leaders. LMC is looking at workforce planning issue; AMC has Futures Project in progress with specific emphasis on Leadership component.
2. Immigration – politically charged issue; we at local level are affected so can we plan on the inevitable from Federal level? Identify the common ground on the issue.
3. Aging, Demographics.

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 14 from 12:00 pm to 3:00 p.m. and includes lunch at League of Minnesota Cities. The Minnesota School Boards Association will chair the meeting.

Agenda items for the June 14 meeting as identified by the group:

- Good Wrap Up of the Legislative Session
- Joint Legislative Conference Potential update

Group adjourned.